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## MISCELLANEOUS JOURNAL.

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[THE REV. S. C. THACHER, late Minister of the New South Church in this town, died at Moulines, in France, Jan. 2, 1818, *Ætat.* 32. He had long been absent from this country, for the recovery of his health. The following sketch of his character is taken from a discourse delivered in this town, the Sunday after the accounts of his death were received. The form, in which the discourse was delivered, is retained, as most favourable to the free expression of the feelings of the author.]

It cannot be necessary to make an apology for offering, in a work of this kind, a tribute to the memory of one, who was not merely distinguished in the church, and for his private virtues, but also for the warm interest he felt in the literature of his country, and for the services which he rendered to it.]

THE news of Mr. Thacher's death, although not unexpected, spread an unusual gloom through the large circle in which he moved and was known. When we thought of his youth and virtues, of the place which he had filled and of the confidence he had inspired, of his sickness and sufferings, of his death in a distant land, and of the hopes which died with him, we could not but speak of his removal as mysterious, dark, untimely. My own mind participated at first in the general depression; but in proportion as I have reflected on the circumstances of this event, I have seen in them a kindness, which I overlooked in the first moments of sorrow; and though in many respects inscrutable, this dispensation now wears a more consoling aspect.

I now see in our friend a young man, uncommonly ripe in understanding and virtue, for whom God appointed an early immortality. His lot on earth was singularly happy; for I have never known a minister more deeply fixed in the hearts of his people. But this condition had its perils. With a paternal concern for his character God sent adversity, and conducted him to the end of his being by a rougher but surer way, a way trodden and consecrated by the steps of the best men before him. He was smitten by sudden sickness; but

even here the hand of God was gentle upon him. His sickness, whilst it wasted the body, had no power over the spirit. His understanding retained its vigour; and his heart, as I often observed, gained new sensibility. His sufferings, by calling forth an almost unprecedented kindness in his people, furnished him with new and constant occasions of pious gratitude, and perhaps he was never so thankful to the Author of his being, as during his sickness.

He was indeed removed at length from the kind offices of his friends. But this event was fitted, and, may I not say, designed, to strengthen his connexion with God, and to prepare him for the approaching dissolution of all earthly ties. I now see him tossed\* on the ocean; but his heart is fixed on the rock of ages. He is borne to another hemisphere, but every where he sees the footsteps and feels the presence of God. New constellations roll over his head, but they guide his mind to the same Heaven, which was his hope at home. I see him at the extremity of Africa, adoring God in the new creation which spreads around him, and thanking him with emotion for the new strength, which that mild atmosphere communicated. I see him too in the trying scene which followed, when he withered and shrunk like a frail plant under the equinoctial sun, still building piety on suffering, and growing in submission, as hope declined. He does not indeed look without an occasional sinking of the heart, without some shudderings of nature, to a foreign soil as his appointed grave. But he remembers, that from every region there is a path to immortality, and that the spirit, which religion has refined, wherever freed from the body, will find its native country. He does not indeed think without emotion of home,—a thought, how trying to a sick and dying man, in a land of strangers! But God, whom he adores as every where present, seems to him a bond of union to distant friends, and he finds relief in committing them to his care and mercy.—At length I see him expire; but not until suffering has done its work of discipline and purification. His end is tranquil, like his own mild spirit; and I follow him—not to the tomb, for that lifeless body is not he—but to the society of the just made perfect. His pains are now past. He has found a better home, than this place of his nativity and earthly residence. Without the tossings of another voyage, he has entered a secure haven. The fever no longer burns in his veins—the hollow and deep voice no longer sends forth

ominous sounds. Disease and death, having accomplished their purpose, have lost their power, and he remembers, with gratitude, the kind severity with which they conducted him to a nobler life, than that which they took away. Such is the aspect which this dispensation now wears;—how different from that which it first presented to sense and imagination!

Let me pay a short tribute to his memory. It is a duty, which I perform with a melancholy pleasure. His character was one, which it is soothing to remember. It comes over the mind, like the tranquillizing breath of spring. It asks no embellishment. It would be injured by a strained and laboured eulogy.

The character of our friend was distinguished by blandness, mildness, equableness and harmony. All the elements were tempered in him kindly and happily.—He had nothing of asperity. He passed through the storms, tumults and collisions of human life, with a benignity akin to that which marked our perfect guide and example. This mild and bland temper spread itself over the whole man. His manners, his understanding, his piety, all received a hue from it, just as a soft atmosphere communicates its own tender and tranquil character to every object and scene viewed through it.

With this peculiar mildness he united firmness. His purposes, whilst maintained without violence, were never surrendered but to conviction. His opinions, though defended with singular candour, he would have sealed with his blood. He possessed the only true dignity, that which results from proposing habitually a lofty standard of feeling and action; and accordingly the love, which he called forth, was always tempered with respect. He was one of the last men to be approached with a rude familiarity.

His piety was a deep sentiment. It had struck through and entwined itself with his whole soul. In the freedom of conversation I have seen how intimately God was present to him. But his piety partook of the general temperament of his mind. It was warm, but not heated; earnest, but tranquil; a habit, not an impulse; the air which he breathed, not a tempestuous wind, giving occasional violence to his emotions. A constant dew seemed to distil on him from heaven, giving freshness to his devout sensibilities; but it was a gentle influence, seen not in its falling, but in its fruits. His piety appeared chiefly in gratitude and submission, sentiments peculiarly suited to such a mind as his. He felt strongly, that God

had crowned his life with peculiar goodness, and yet, when his blessings were withdrawn, his acquiescence was as deep and sincere as his thankfulness. His devotional exercises in publick were particularly striking. He came to the mercy seat, as one, **who** was not a stranger there. He seemed to inherit from his venerable father the gift of prayer. His acts of adoration discovered a mind penetrated by the majesty and purity of God; but his sublime conceptions of these attributes were always tempered and softened by a sense of the divine benignity. The *paternal character* of God was not only his belief, but had become a part of his mind. He never forgot, that he ‘worshipped *the Father*.’ His firm conviction of the strict and proper unity of the divine nature taught him to unite and concentrate in his conception of *the Father*, all that is lovely and attractive, as well as all that is solemn and venerable; and the general effect of his prayers was to diffuse a devout calmness, a filial confidence, over the minds of his pious hearers.

His understanding was of a high order; active, vigorous and patient; capable of exerting itself with success on every subject; collecting materials and illustrations from every scene; and stored with a rich and various knowledge, which few have accumulated at so early an age. His understanding, however, was in harmony with his whole character. It was not so much distinguished by boldness, rapidity and ardour, as by composed energy, judiciousness, and expansiveness. You have an emblem of it in the full, transparent and equable stream, spreading around it fruitfulness and delight. His views were often original and often profound, but were especially marked by justness, clearness and compass of thought. I have never known a man, so young, of riper judgment, of more deliberate investigation, and of more comprehensive views of all the bearings and connexions of a subject, on which he was called to decide. He was singularly free from the error into which young preachers most readily fall, of overstating arguments, and exaggerating and straining the particular topics which they wish to enforce. But in avoiding extravagance, he did not fall into tameness. There was a force and freshness in his conceptions; and even when he communicated the thoughts of others, he first grafted them on his own mind, so that they had the raciness of a native growth. His opinions were the results of much mental action, of many comparisons, of large and liberal thinking, of

looking at a subject on every side ; and they were expressed with those limitations, which long experience suggests to others. He read with pleasure the bold and brilliant speculations of more adventurous minds ; but he reserved his belief for evidence, for truth ; and if the most valuable gift of the understanding be an enlarged, discriminating judgment, then his was a most highly gifted mind.

From a mind so balanced, and a taste so refined, we could hardly expect that fervid eloquence, which electrifies an assembly, and makes the speaker for a moment an absolute sovereign over the souls of men. His influence, like that of the great powers in the natural world, was mild and noiseless, but penetrating and enduring. That oratory, which overwhelms and bears us away like a torrent, almost always partakes of exaggeration and extravagance, and was therefore incompatible with the distinguishing properties of his mind.—His imagination was fruitful and creative ; but, in accordance with his whole character, it derived its illustrations more frequently from regions of beauty than of grandeur, and it imparted a colouring, at once rich and soft, and a peculiar grace to every subject susceptible of ornament.—His command over language was great. His style was various, vigorous, unborrowed ; abounding in felicities of expression, and singularly free from that triteness and that monotonous structure, which the habit of rapid composition on familiar subjects almost forces on the preacher, and which so often enervate the most powerful and heart-stirring truths.—His character as a preacher needs no other testimony than the impression left on his constant and most enlightened hearers. To his people, who could best judge of his intellectual resources, and of his devotion to his work, his publick services were more and more interesting. They tell us of the affluence of his thoughts, of the beauty of his imagery, of the tenderness and earnestness of his persuasion, of the union of judgment and sensibility in his discourses, and of the wisdom with which he displayed at the same moment the sublimity and practicableness of Christian virtue. They tell us, that the early ripeness of his mind did not check its growth ; but that every year enlarged his treasures and powers. Their tears and countenances tell us, more movingly than words, their deep sorrow, now that they shall hear his voice no more.

Of his social character I need not speak to you. No one, who ever met him in a friendly circle, can easily forget the

attraction of his manners and conversation. He carried into society a cheerfulness, and sunshine of the soul, derived partly from constitution, and partly from his bright, confiding views of religion ; a delicacy, which instinctively shrunk from wounding the feelings of the humblest human being ; a disposition to sympathise with every innocent enjoyment ; and the power of communicating with ease and interest the riches of his mind. Without effort, he won the hearts of men to a singular degree. Never was man more universally beloved. Even in sickness and in foreign lands, he continued to attract friends ; and it is our consolation to know, that he drew from strangers much of that kindness which blessed him at home.

In his sickness I was particularly struck with his submission to God, and his affection for his people. His submission seemed entire. There was no alloy of impatience or distrust. His sickness was a severe trial ; for his heart was bound up in his profession, and if in any thing his ambition was excessive, it was in his desire to enrich his mind by laborious study. He felt deeply his privation, and he looked forward to an early death as a probable event. But he bowed to Providence without a murmur. He spoke only of the divine goodness. ‘I am in God’s hand, and his will be done,’ were familiar sentiments, not uttered with common place and mechanical formality, but issuing, as his tones and countenance discovered, from the very depths of his heart. A firmer and calmer submission could hardly have been formed by a long life of suffering.

His feelings towards his people seemed at times too strong for the self-possession and calmness by which he was characterised. Their kindness overpowered him. The only tears, which I saw start from his eyes, flowed from this source. In my last interview with him, a day or two before his voyage, I said to him, ‘I trust that you will return, but I fear you cannot safely continue your pastoral relation. We have, however, another employment for you, in which you may be useful and happy.’ He answered, ‘if I get strength I shall use it for my people. I am willing to hazard my life for their sakes. I would preach to them, although the effort should shorten my days.’ He added—‘Should I forsake my people after the kindness I have received, the cause of religion and of the ministry might suffer ; and to this cause I ought and am willing to make any sacrifices.’—Such is a brief sketch of our lamented friend. He was one of the most blameless men, of the most devoted ministers, and of the fairest examples of the distinguishing virtues of Christianity.